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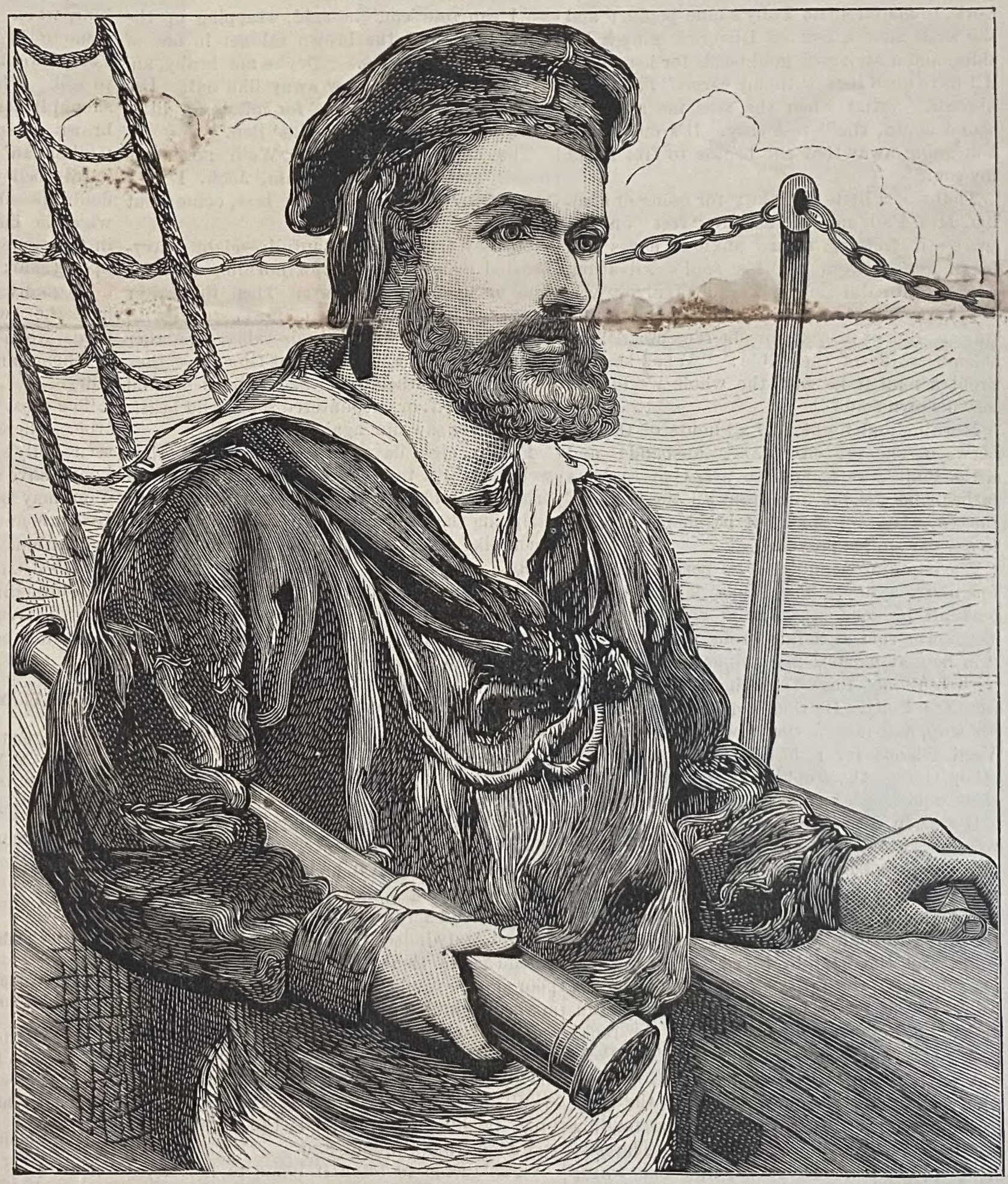
POLLY'S POPLIN GOWN.

M. E. BRADLEY.



Little Polly Craddock was a sailor's daughter. Her father was captain of the "Mohawk," a good ship that had made money for her owners in the whale fishery, and now—on a bright winter morning in the first year of the century—was bound for Ireland with a cargo of flax-seed.

The night before she sailed, the captain asked Polly what he should bring her for a present; and Polly, who liked pretty new dresses, as most little girls do, said she wanted an Irish poplin gown. And the color of it must be blue.

"Blue it shall be," said the captain, as he laughed and kissed her good-night. And Polly went off to bed to dream of how fine she would be in her blue poplin gown, when father came back. But her mother did not look so pleased.

"You haven't asked me what I wanted," she said, after Polly had gone out, and she sat alone with her husband by the fire.

"I suppose I can guess," he answered. "It's always the same old story. If you could content yourself with a poplin gown, now"——

"But I can't," she interrupted. "I shall never be contented with anything less than the pearl of great price."

"I thought you had it already," the captain replied.

"And so I hope I have," she said. "But I want you to have it too, Ben. When you come home, and tell me that you've found that treasure that is worth all the world besides, I shall be satisfied. And Polly, or anybody else, may have the poplin gowns. I shall want nothing else then. But that I do want, and shall keep on wanting to the day of my death—till I get it."

"I wish I could give it to you," the captain said, looking troubled as he saw the tears in his wife's eyes. "But what's a man going to do about a thing of that sort, Polly? I haven't got religion, and I can't pretend I have, just to please you, my dear."

"But you can get it. The Lord says: 'Ask, and you shall receive.' You've never asked yet."

"Well, that's true. I've been too busy to give my mind to it so far. But wait a while, Polly, and don't worry. May-be I'll come to it yet."

"It's easy to say 'don't worry.' But how do you suppose I feel, Ben, when you are out on the wide ocean, and I sit here alone at night with little Polly asleep, and the wind roaring in the chimney, and storms driving you to destruction, for all I know? If you knew what I suffered for your sake, Ben"——

And here Mrs. Craddock's voice broke down. She began to cry, and the captain put his arms round her, and kissed her, and tried to comfort her; and the matter ended as it had done so many times before. For he was not a Christian; and though he loved his wife dearly, he could not bring himself to her way of thinking about these things.

When the next morning came, bright and clear, with a fair wind blowing, it was up and away with the captain. And when the Mohawk weighed anchor and sailed out of harbor, like a great white swan with its wings outspread, he laughed in his heart at what he called "my Polly's foolish notions."

"I'll buy her a brown tabinet when I get to Cork, to match little Polly's blue poplin; and she shall have a box of Limerick gloves besides, and a string of gold beads for her neck; if I have good luck with my cargo," he said to himself. "And when she sees me safe and sound again, she'll rest easy. It's only when I'm going away that she begins to fret about my soul."

That was a little mistake; for going or coming, Mrs. Polly never ceased to "fret" on that score—if fretting means anxious hopes and fears, and prayers for his soul's salvation. The captain did not know how truly it was her heart's desire and prayer to God at all times. But so it was; for she remembered the solemn words of the Bible: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Morning and night, and all hours of the day between, she prayed for her husband; and little Polly was taught to ask God to bless father, and deliver him from all the perils of the sea, whenever she knelt beside her mother to say her simple prayers.

The captain encountered no perils, however, for many a day. The Mohawk reached her port all in good season and condition; the cargo was sold at a fair profit; and the captain bought various fine things to take home with him—not forgetting the sky-blue poplin for little Polly. He then concluded to ballast his ship, and take a run down to the Cape de Verd Islands for a load of salt, skins, and other things that could be bought cheaply there, and sold at a good price in New York.

It was in the spring-time, in pleasant April weather, when they put to sea again, with a fair wind, and every prospect of a prosperous voyage. For ten days, wind and weather favored them; but on the eleventh there was fog; and though land should have been in sight, and the captain paced the deck, spy-glass in hand, the misty sky and the misty sea were all that could be seen. The good ship, drifting out of her course, ran upon the rocks on the coast of Barbary; and while little Polly was saying her bedtime prayer—"God bless dear father, and keep him safe from the cruel sea"—her father and his crew were struggling for their lives in the raging ocean. The ship being fast upon the rocks, and the waves pounding her to pieces, they had to launch small boats, and try to reach the land in that way. The sailors gathered together their little treasures, and packed them in as close a space as might be; the captain's black man, Jack, brought his master's trunk from the cabin, and stowed it in the long boat; kegs of water and biscuit were put in also; and then the men pushed out for land in two small boats, not knowing what their fate would be.

For one of them, alas! it was soon decided. A great wave lifted her like a child's toy, tossed her high on its crest for one moment, then swallowed her up in a swamping sea that drowned every creature in her. The other had the good fortune to reach a landing-place, with their goods and provisions uninjured. But from this time suffering began for them, such as none of them had ever dreamed of before.

They had landed on a desert coast, where the tropical sun blazed over their heads, the hot sand blistered their feet, and where there was not a tree to shelter them, or a spring of water to give them drink. It would only be lingering death to remain there, so the captain decided to march on into the interior, and take his chances with the natives. Food and water must be carried, and other luggage abandoned; but the faithful negro man, Jack, refused to leave behind the presents his master had bought for wife and child.

"I can tote 'em," he said, wrapping up the blue poplin and the brown tabinet in one of his own clean shirts. "Dey'se not heaby, an' dey's too purty to frow away like dat. I'se gwine to fotch 'em home for missis an' little Polly; you see ef I don't, Mas' Ben."

The captain groaned. "We'll never see missis and little Polly again, Jack, I very much fear. But we'll do our best, come what may."

So they trudged on manfully—eight heavy-hearted men—over miles of burning sand, for four or five wretched days. Then the water gave out, and two of the men went mad with thirst and fever, and died miserably. Another man disappeared in the night-time, and they did not know whether he had strayed off and killed himself, or encountered some wild beast. They never saw him again.

Finally, eight days after the shipwreck, they were met by a troop of Arabs, who took them prisoners, robbed them of all their goods, even stripping the clothes off their backs, and drove them like cattle before them, to their far-off tents.

Their sufferings in this march through the desert, and in the dreadful year of captivity that followed, are too terrible to be described. Their Arab masters were followers of Mahomet, and hated "the Christian dogs," as they called our poor sailors. So they were beaten and abused most cruelly; fed upon the filthiest food that can be imagined, and kept for days at a time with neither bread nor water; made to sleep in pens that were worse than pig-styes; exposed naked to heat and cold; and treated, in short, with every species of inhumanity. If it had not been for their hope of getting money for their ransom, the Arabs would have murdered their prisoners at once. And indeed there were many times when each of them—from the captain down to poor Jack—would have preferred death to the sufferings inflicted on them.

Poor Jack at last sank under his many hardships. The captain was wakened one night by his groaning. He begged for water, and talked wildly about "missis an' little Polly," and the blue poplin gown, which the Arabs had snatched from him long ago.

"I'se gwine to fotch it home to her, Mas' Ben," he cried out aloud; and then there came a queer rattling in his throat, and his head fell back. The poor, faithful creature was dead.

You can well believe that the captain mourned his loss, and that his heart was heavy with the fear that he too would perish before ever he saw again his dear wife and child. The memory of their last parting, and of the earnest words his wife had spoken then, came back to him now with new force. A want that he had never felt before constrained him; and, kneeling down upon the desert sands, with poor, dead Jack beside him, and the silent stars above him, little Polly's father prayed, for the first time in his life, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

It would make my true story too long to tell you of all the adventures that befell the few survivors of the shipwreck before they were finally ransomed. The captain succeeded at last in persuading his savage masters to carry him to Mogadore, where the British Consul at once took measures to secure his freedom, and that of his companions. Some benevolent gentlemen advanced the needful money, provided the poor captives with decent clothing, and paid their passage home to America. But a curious thing happened before they started.

The captain sat talking one day with the friends in Mogadore, who had been so kind to him, when a wild Arab, carrying a bundle, came to the house, and wanted to know if the Consul would buy some fine cloth that he had to sell. When the bundle was opened, what should it contain but the blue poplin and the brown tabinet that poor Jack had saved for "missis an' little Polly"! The captain could hardly believe his eyes, and yet there was no doubt possible. There were the very stuffs which he had bought at Cork a year ago, still in the same wrappers with the dealer's mark upon them; and I will leave you to imagine how gladly he bought them over again, and how the two Pollies wept and rejoiced by turns, when at last the new gowns came home to them, and they heard all the wonderful story.

The most wonderful part of it is that it is true. There are people living still who have seen Polly's blue poplin gown, and for all I know, have scraps of it yet in their possession. You may be sure it was kept as a precious treasure, and handed down from generation to generation. As for her mother, she had her heart's desire when she knew that her husband had brought her at last "the pearl of great price." And she gave God thanks, and was happy all the days of her life.

MAKE YOUR MOTHER HAPPY.

Children, make your mother happy—
Make her sing instead of sigh;
For the mournful hour of parting
May be very, very nigh.

Children, make your mother happy—
Many griefs has she to bear;
And she wearies 'neath her burdens;
Can you not these burdens share?

Children, make your mother happy—
Prompt obedience cheers the heart;
While a willful disobedience
Pierces like a poisoned dart.

Children, make your mother happy—
On her brow the lines of care
Deepen daily, don't you see them?—
While your own are smooth and fair.

Children, make your mother happy—
For beneath the coffin-lid,
All too soon her face, so saint-like,
Shall forevermore be hid.

IT is often hard to realize the plainest truths

GOOD FOR EVIL.

M. E. BRADLEY.

Annie Leighton came home from school in an ill-humor one day. Various things had happened to annoy her; and her temper was not sweetened by discovering, when she entered the sitting-room, an unwelcome visitor seated in her favorite rattan-chair.

There was no reason why Rose Warner should have been an unwelcome visitor, except for Annie's foolish pride, which made her ashamed of her poor relations. Rose was a cousin who lived in the country, and dressed very plainly. Not a cousin to be proud of, as far as externals went; and the inner beauty of her heart and mind, Annie had not yet discovered.

It was with a bad grace that she greeted her, and in a most unamiable way that she obeyed her mother's request to make her a glass of lemonade.

"I don't know whether it's good or not," she said, rudely, as she handed the goblet and spoon to Rose. "You can have some more sugar, if you want it."

"I don't think I shall want it," Rose answered, quietly. "I am sorry you have taken so much trouble, Annie."

She was tempted to put down the lemonade untasted, but would not, lest she should mortify her aunt, who was always kind to her. She sipped the carelessly-made beverage, and tried not to show how hurt she felt at Annie's rude behavior. But she was glad when her father came to take her home, and politely, but very decidedly, refused her aunt's invitation to stay all night.

The summer went by before the cousins met again. Winter came with its snowy weather, and a sleighing party was made up for a certain moonlight night. Annie Leighton and her brother, with a dozen or more of their young companions, were in the party, and everybody counted upon a "perfectly splendid" time. They were going to drive five or six miles out in the country, and stop at a hotel for refreshments, and a dance, before coming home again. Annie was wild with pleasure at the prospect, and never dreamed of anything to spoil it.

But accidents often happen to sleighing parties. It was a cold night, and the horses were impatient. Other sleighs were out, with jingling bells and reckless drivers; and somehow or other—no one knew exactly how it happened—there was a collision; two sleighs were upset, and any number of screaming girls and boys were thrown out into the snow. They picked themselves up unhurt, for the most part; but Annie Leighton, when she tried to rise, fell back fainting, with a broken leg.

"What can we do with her?" asked the leader of the party, in dismay. "We are five miles away from home."

"But we are only half a mile away from my Uncle Warner's house," said her brother Charles. "We must take her there."

The family were all in bed when the sleigh drove up to the door; but they rose promptly, and poor Annie was put into Rose's own bed, and made as comfortable as possible, until a doctor could be sent for. For six weeks she lay there helpless, and dependent on the kindness of the girl to whom she had been so rude in her own house.

But that kindness never failed her in word or deed. Rose Warner had learned to follow the example of Christ in returning good for evil; and her sweet behavior was a daily lesson to her cousin. On that sick bed, Annie learned the true value of things; and she loves nobody better now than the cousin whom she once despised.

EXCELLING.

Many years ago, a poor boy, with his "things" tied up in a handkerchief, walked twenty miles, one cold winter's day, to a blacksmith's shop, where he was going to serve an apprenticeship.

His name was David Maydole.

David stayed with his master six years. There were other apprentices in the shop But after working a year or two, and getting some smattering of the business, they quit and went to work for wages elsewhere.

"And why don't you go, David?" they asked. "You are a fool to stay on here, and work, year after year, as faithfully as you do, for nothing but your board."

"I stay to master the business," was always David's answer; and nothing could tempt him to leave until he learned about it all there was to learn. That was at twenty-one; when he left with nothing but his freedom suit.

"Nothing," did I say? He was master of his trade in all its branches. And there is no better capital to begin life with.

Not quite satisfied, however, with his attainments, David went into a manufactory of edged tools, and learned all he could about working in steel. He was then ready to open a small shop of his own, which he did in Norwich, New York.

One day a carpenter, at work on a new church in the neighborhood, lost his hammer, and he went to David to make him one. David did so. Pretty soon five more of the carpenters came, and each wanted a hammer. Then the master came and spoke for two.

The master took his to a hardware store, and asked why they did not sell hammers like these?

"Such hammers are not in the market," replied the hardware man.

"Then engage Maydole to make you some," said the master, who then took a couple of dozen to show a merchant in New York.

"A very superior article," said the merchant, a little afraid of the price; but their excellence led him to send an order for twenty dozen.

In spite of new forges and new machinery for every department of the work, from that time David Maydole has never been able to catch up with the orders which have come in upon him; and his market extends from South America to Japan.

His motto has been "Excel." First-rate work always makes its way, and commands the market. His hammers, to be sure, cost more at first, but there are no hammers like them. They are at the top of the trade. None but skilled workmen are employed on the premises, and he never lets a tool leave the shop until it is as perfect as the most skillful labor and the best material can make it.

Boys and girls, be thorough!

STRANGE COMPANIONS.

I presume you have all heard of Barnum's "happy family." In a large cage he keeps a number of animals that are natural enemies—cats, birds, rats, monkeys, and snakes—I believe. It seems very singular that such animals could be taught to dwell together in peace. But in our picture we see a thing which is even more remarkable—the prairie

dog, the owl, and the rattle-snake, all dwelling together, of their own free choice, in one home, and in perfect peace. One wonders that the owls do not fall a prey to the snake, and that the little dogs do not worry the life out of the snake; but no quarrels, I believe, ever arise in their happy homes.

THE YOUNG REAPER

PHILADELPHIA, MARCH 7, 1886.

FROM THE ORIENT.

We have several times made mention of the Rev. J. B. Haygooni, now in Constantinople, Turkey, working among his countrymen as a special Missionary of the Baptist Publication Society. His reports make very interesting reading. We give some extracts, without comment save that such a work ought to be maintained and strengthened:

"I received a telegram from a Bulgarian young gentleman to go to Rustchuk, and baptize him and his two friends. . . . A few weeks ago, he and a Macedonian brother started; one from Bulgaria, and the other from Macedonia, for Constantinople, to be baptized by me. After traveling hundreds of miles, when they reached Philippopolis, the capital of Eastern Roumalia, the present revolution broke out, and they were so entangled on account of the confusion peculiar to such a state, that they could not make their way through to Constantinople, and so were obliged to go to a different direction, and went to Rustchuk, a city of Bulgaria, about three hundred miles from Constantinople. . . . I found a good Baptist Church there organized by some of our missionary Baptist missionaries, and left for some years without any pastor or missionary. . . . The two young brethren mentioned above, and also a brother in Rustchuk, being found worthy subjects, I baptized them, and afterwards administered the Lord's Supper. After the baptism, one brother went to Macedonia, another to Bulgaria, and the third, who is a merchant, remained in Rustchuk, his home. . . . It may be interesting, if I mention the case of one of the brethren there. As soon as I reached Rustchuk, amongst some other brethren, this man was introduced to me with these words: 'This man was a robber.' When I inquired the meaning of this strange introduction, I learned that he really had been a robber, and belonged to a band of rebels. Once when he came to Rustchuk, for the interest of the band, he was brought under the influence of the gospel, and was converted. Since his conversion, he has given all his time for the conversion of souls, without any pay for his services. One evening he gathered a congregation for me from Mohammedans, and I preached to them—a chance that we cannot easily find in Constantinople. . . . In our last quarterly letter, we reported to you the organization of the First Baptist Church of Constantinople, and the First Bithynian Baptist Church. In the present quarter, there were three added to the First Bithynian Baptist Church, and one to the First Baptist Church of Constantinople; besides the three brethren whom we baptized in Rustchuk. The Sunday-school and the congregation of the Bithynian Church were considerably enlarged. There are some persons who are of high standing, desirous of being baptized in the future. . . . The work of this quarter we state as follows: Miles traveled, 1,060; pages of tracts distributed, 47,930; sermons preached, 63; prayer-meetings, 33; families and individuals visited, 1,519; persons baptized, five; received on profession of faith, one; Sunday-schools held, 30; letters written, 255; and persons receiving free medical advice, 153."

MISS JONES' PICTURE.

I have just been looking at Miss Jones' picture. How do you think Miss Jones looks?

She wears a shawl pinned close up to her throat, a cap tied under her chin, and a pair of spectacles over some very wise-looking eyes.

What a funny-looking picture! I call it a funny picture, because the clothes are an old lady's clothes; but the face is a little girl's face, round, and plump, and rosy. If I could take off the cap, and the shawl, and the spectacles, I should see a little girl of four years, with a white dress, a pink sash, and long curls hanging down over her shoulders.

Her name is Edith May. Her mamma calls her Edie. Edie likes to fix herself up, and "play people," as she calls it. She takes many different parts.

Sometimes she is an old lady, and sometimes she is a young lady. Sometimes she plays she is mamma; and then she runs round taking care of her dollies, and says she doesn't know what she shall do now that Tilly has the measles, and Hannah has the chicken-pox; and she verily believes that the baby has the measles too.

The other day, she said she was going to be Miss Jones, and go down to the saloon, and have her picture taken.

So she fixed herself up with cap, and spectacles, and shawl, and went down to the photograph-room, and told the artist that she was Miss Jones, and she had called to have her picture taken.

Then the artist placed a chair for her, and she sat up as straight as she could. When the pictures were finished, he sent them to her mamma, who has sent one to me; and here you have it in THE REAPER.

IMPROVE TIME.

SPURGEON says: "The mere lapse of time will not advance us in the divine life. We do not ripen, necessarily, because our years fulfill their tale; gray hair and great grace are not inseparable companions. Time may be wasted as well as improved; we may be petrified rather than perfected by the flow of years."

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